

UNADJUSTED CONTRACTS OF TENNESSEE RIVER IMPROVEMENT.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 89.]

MARCH 1, 1860.

Mr. ELY, from the Committee on Claims, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred the bill "to liquidate the unadjusted contracts of the Tennessee river improvement," have had the same under consideration, and beg leave to report :

On the 30th of August, 1852, Congress made an appropriation for the improvement of the navigation of the Tennessee river of fifty thousand dollars, in conformity with the estimate of the War Department of July 13, 1852, to be expended under the superintendence of the Secretary of War. (10 stat. 60.)

The work was placed under the charge of the late Lieutenant Colonel McClelland, U. S. A., by the War Department. To aid him in the management of the work, it was thought necessary by the department to invest him with power to engage the services of certain persons resident in the neighborhood, and familiar with the localities, as assistant engineers. Accordingly the following commission was prepared under the direction of the Bureau of Topographical Engineers, and addressed respectively to Messrs. J. E. S. Blackwell, James C. Luttrell, Jacob Newman, C. W. Charleton, and W. G. Brownlow, namely :

BUREAU OF TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS,
Washington, April 5, 1853.

SIR: Your name (among others) has been submitted to the War Department on the representation of the Hon. Mr. Churchill, for employment, if necessary, as assistant engineer under Lieutenant Colonel McClelland, in reference to the improvement of the Tennessee river.

Lieutenant Colonel McClelland will judge of the necessity of the time, and of the duration of your employment.

Respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

J. J. ABERT,
Colonel Corps Topographical Engineers.

During the years 1853 and 1854 a large amount of labor was performed under the general direction of Colonel McClelland and the immediate supervision of these five assistants. Many persons, mechanics and laborers, were employed, and the work was carried on with great activity until the death of Colonel McClelland, by cholera, in the latter part of August, 1854. Finding the appropriation about exhausted, and apprehending that it was not likely to be continued, the work was suspended, and upon the failure of the river and harbor appropriation bill was discontinued, and the boats, tools and materials sold. After the decease of Colonel McClelland, until the discontinuance of the work, his place was supplied by Mr. R. W. W. Byrd, civil engineer. On closing up the accounts, it appeared that, after appropriating the proceeds of the sales, and exhausting the original appropriation, there remained some balances which there were no funds to pay.

A portion of the compensation due to the assistant engineer, and the pay of the foreman upon the work; small accounts due to sundry citizens for powder, &c., &c., used in their operations; medical and surgical attentions to a laborer injured while in the employ of the government, under circumstances which rendered it proper for the engineer in his judgment to provide for his treatment; these are the accounts and items for the auditing of which this bill provides and makes the necessary appropriation.

The following letter from Colonel Abert to the Secretary of War recognizes the justice of the claims:

BUREAU OF TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS,
Washington, January 26, 1857.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge your direction to report upon a communication from the chairman of the Committee on Commerce of the House of Representatives, of the 19th instant, submitting for information and opinion "A bill to liquidate unadjusted contracts of the Tennessee river improvement."

The unadjusted contracts or accounts for services, &c., on account of the improvement of the Tennessee river, with the correspondence in relation to them, are on file in the office of the Third Auditor, and it is respectfully suggested that the claims should be liquidated by the accounting officers, as provided in the bill.

Respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

J. J. ABERT,
Colonel Topographical Engineers.

Hon. JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.

Your committee therefore report back the bill, and recommend its passage.